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AUTHOR Petrowsky, Michael C.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of economics faculty at 16 community colleges in Arizona to identify common problems in the teaching of economics and to assist in course articulation and curriculum development. The survey examined faculty attitudes and concerns about placement exams, course sequencing, prerequisites, and such instructional issues as the use of textbooks, writing assignments, software, and audiovisual materials. Surveys were sent to 27 faculty members at 16 community colleges statewide, and 18 usable surveys were returned for a 66% response rate. Study results included the following: (1) close to 75% of the faculty agreed that an appropriate score on placement exams should be a prerequisite to taking an economics course; (2) over 75% of the faculty teaching in the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) expressed a desire to see both microeconomics and macroeconomics courses renumbered to a higher level; (3) over 70% of the respondents indicated that some algebra was used in microeconomics and macroeconomics, and two-thirds of the faculty were in favor of a math prerequisite; (4) close to 80% of the respondents made use of study guides, and over 80% required writing assignments; (5) the most common ancillary materials used to supplement textbooks were newspaper or magazine articles; (6) 70% of the respondents indicated that they seldom or never used audiovisual materials for instruction, and almost 90% reported never using computer software; and (7) over 90% of the faculty stated that they tested at least four times each semester. Data tables and the survey instrument are included. (PAA)

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THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ECONOMICS FACULTY IN ARIZONA:

An Instructional and Articulation Survey

PARADISE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

February, 1992

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PARADISE VALLEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

To: Survey Respondents –
Arizona Community College Economics Faculty

From: Michael C. Petrowsky MCP

Date: February 14, 1992

Re: Survey Results –
Instructional and Articulation Survey of Community College Economics Faculty in Arizona

You will find attached the survey results from the instructional and articulation questionnaire. I want to thank each of you for the time and effort that you expended in answering the many questions that were in the survey instruments. As a result of your efforts, we now have a better sense of statewide faculty preferences in the economics field.

Many individuals were extremely helpful to me in the design and preparation of the survey. Ken Roberts, the Dean of Instruction at Paradise Valley Community College, played a key role in the design of the instrument. My two colleagues at PVCC, Jeanne Franco and Sue Van Boven, provided helpful and substantive comments that materially improved the final product. Charles Pflanz, from Scottsdale Community College, and Paul DePippo, Hannes Kvaran, and Gay Garesche, all from Glendale Community College, provided helpful review and editorial comment. Finally, a word of genuine thanks to Norma Mondragon for typing the manuscript and giving it the "polish" that it needed.

18401 North 32nd Street Phoenix, Arizona 85032 602 • 493 • 2600

Instructional and Articulation

Survey of Community College Economics Faculty in Arizona

PARADISE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

February, 1992

Instructional and Articulation
Survey of Community College Economics Faculty in Arizona

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PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Arizona Western College

Chandler-Gilbert Community College Center

Cochise Community College

Glendale Community College

Mesa Community College

Mohave Community College

Paradise Valley Community College

Phoenix College

Pima Community College

Scottsdale Community College

I. Purpose of Survey

Faculty that teach economics in Arizona Community Colleges were surveyed for their views on both articulation and instructional issues that affect the teaching of economics. The purpose of gathering these views was to (1) identify common problems and (2) to provide a data base that would be helpful in promoting changes in course and curriculum development.

II. Scope, Design of Survey

Faculty were polled using a survey instrument that consisted of two sections. The first part dealt principally with articulation issues and emphasized such concerns as placement exams, course sequencing, and course prerequisites. The second part, which emphasized instructional issues, centered on content exams, ancillary materials, and related academic concerns. Because of different institutional requirements, there were minor differences in the surveys that were used for MCCCD (Maricopa County) and non MCCCD faculty. The survey instruments are listed as Appendix A and B.

The surveys were sent to 27 faculty in 16 Arizona Community Colleges. Of this total, 16 were affiliated with the MCCCD, while the remaining 11 were located in community colleges across the state.

Eighteen faculty responded to the surveys. The overall response rate was thus 66 percent. Of this total, 13 respondents were from the MCCCD. For non MCCCD faculty, the five respondents (out of 11) generated a response rate of 45 percent.

III. Articulation Survey Results

The purpose of the articulation survey was to poll faculty preferences concerning such issues as the need for placement exams, the need for prerequisites, and preferences on related issues such as course sequence and course credits granted.

A. Placement Exams

Tables 1 through 3 summarize the views of economics faculty on the need for placement exams in reading, english, and math. For both MCCCD and non MCCCD faculty, there appears to be a widespread opinion that placement exams, with an appropriate score, should be a student prerequisite for taking economics. Indeed, it is fair to say that almost three fourths of surveyed faculty indicated this preference.

B. Course Numbering, Level

At least for the MCCCD, the micro and macro courses are numbered at the 100 level. Table 4 indicates, however, that over 75 percent of the MCCCD faculty would like to see the micro and macro courses renumbered to the 200 level. It should be noted that four non MCCCD colleges had already done this.

C. Level of Math Currently Used, Math Prerequisites

Table 5 indicates the level of math the faculty reported that they used in the micro and macroeconomics classes. Over 70 percent indicated that some algebra was used. The remainder indicated that some ability to read and interpret graphs was essential. This is further supported by the fact that two thirds of the faculty (Table 6) indicated that they would be in favor of a math prerequisite. For those that favored a math prerequisite (Table 7), 75 percent indicated introductory algebra as a preferred level.

D. Course Sequence

In the MCCCD, as in many other colleges, macroeconomics is normally taken before microeconomics. The numbering sequence (111 for macro and 112 for micro) reflects this. The poll of the Maricopa faculty, however, (Table 8) indicated a preference for reversing this sequence. Curiously, about 53 percent were in favor of this, while the remainder felt that the sequence was not important.

E. Course Credits

Economics courses (both micro and macro) normally earn 3 credits. Faculty were asked if the micro and macro courses should carry four credits each. As table 9

indicates, two thirds of the faculty preferred the current 3 credit hour arrangement. Maricopa faculty, however, were about evenly divided. If the economics courses did carry 4 credit hours, the vast majority (Table 10) would like to see the extra hour used as a lab instead of an extended lecture. How this lab would be structured (Table 11) showed wide variation, with responses citing tutorials, simulations, and related review strategies.

IV. Instructional Survey Results

The purpose of the instructional survey was to determine if there were common problems or patterns that characterized the teaching of economics at the community college level. This section thus examines the use of textbooks, writing assignments, software, and audiovisuals, as media by which economics is taught.

A. Study Guides

Most publishers provide study guides with their textbooks. As Table 12 indicates, however, almost 80 percent of polled faculty make the study guide optional. For those that use the study guide, and make it a requirement, the pattern is to assign problems and/or to use it as homework as illustrated by Table 13.

B. Paper/Writing Assignments

Tables 14 and 15 summarize how faculty view the use of writing assignments in their classes. Table 14 shows that over 80 percent of faculty require paper/writing assignments in their economic classes. From Table 15, the common pattern involves essay exams, brief paper assignments, or even term papers.

C. Ancillary Materials

The use of ancillary materials (other than a text or study guide) is a common practice by faculty. Indeed, over 83 percent (Table 16) use outside materials in their classrooms. While the type of ancillary materials that are used vary, the practice (Table 17) most commonly found is to supplement textbook material with newspaper or magazine articles.

D. Audiovisual Materials

Tables 18 and 19 examine the use of audiovisual materials by economics faculty. As the Tables indicate, audiovisual materials are seldom used by faculty in their economics classes, for approximately 70 percent of faculty reported that they seldom or never used audiovisual materials. For those that did use these materials, no discernible pattern was uncovered.

Non use by faculty may be related to the cognitive, didactic nature of economics as well as by the lack of suitable audiovisual material. From Table 19, it appears that much of the audiovisuals used are related to current events.

E. Computer Software

Computer software is not commonly used in economics classes. As Table 20 highlights, almost 90 percent of faculty reported that they did not use computer software in their classes. Those that did use software, moreover, were MCCCD faculty; no non MCCCD faculty used software. The reasons for this nonuse are probably quite varied, but would certainly include lack of time and the unsuitability of much of the software that is currently on the market. Some colleges, perhaps, lack the hardware capability.

F. Extra Credit Work

Over 50 percent of faculty stated that they made extra credit work available in their micro and macro classes. Data for this are shown in Table 21.

G. Testing Frequency, Format

Tables 22 through 24 examine test frequency and format. From Table 22, it is obvious that the most common testing format involves multiple choice questions. If essay questions are added, the combination covers almost 75 percent of survey respondents. In terms of test frequency, over 90 percent of faculty polled stated that they tested at least four times during the semester. Approximately 50 percent (Table 24) gave a comprehensive final exam in their micro and macro classes.

V. Conclusions

Based on the survey, there appears to be a widespread consensus concering the following items:

- Most faculty in economics expressed a preference for placement exams in reading, math, and english.
- The MCCCD faculty would like to see ECN 111 and 112 raised to the 200 level.
- A preference was expressed for a math prerequisite. This prerequisite would presumably be an introductory algebra course, although intermediate algebra may be an option.
- The Maricopa faculty indicated a slight preference for reversing the Economics 111 - 112 sequence, thus making microeconomics the preferred first course.
- The current 3 credit hours granted to the micro and macro courses should be retained.
- Audiovisual materials and computer software are not widely used. Nonuse is perhaps explained by the unsuitability of most materials in the economics classes.

Name: _____
College: _____
Date: _____

I. Articulation Survey of Economics Faculty — MCCCD

1. Should a standardized, normed, reading placement instrument, with an appropriate score, be a student prerequisite for taking economics?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Should a standardized, normed math placement instrument, with an appropriate score, be a student prerequisite for taking economics?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Should a standardized, normed English placement instrument, with an appropriate score, be a student prerequisite for taking economics?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. In the MCCCD, macro and microeconomics are offered as ECN 111 and ECN 112. Should they be renumbered to 200 level courses?

☐ Yes ☐ **No**

5. Describe the level of the math that is used in your micro and macro courses.

_____
_____
_____

6. Would you be in favor of a math prerequisite for micro and macroeconomics?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please check the maximal requirement you feel appropriate.

- ☐ Basic Arithmetic
- ☐ Introductory Algebra
- ☐ Calculus
- ☐ Other _____

7. Currently, the sequence in the MCCCD is ECN 111 (Macroeconomics) and ECN 112 (Microeconomics). What sequence would you prefer?

- ☐ Macroeconomics before microeconomics
- ☐ Microeconomics before macroeconomics
- ☐ The sequence is not important

8. Economics courses in the MCCCD carry three credits. Should the micro and macro courses carry four credit hours each?

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. If the economics courses (micro and macro) were to carry 4 credits, how should this extra hour be structure?

- ☐ Extended lecture
- ☐ Lab

10. For question nine above, if a lab were to be used for the one extra credit hour, how would you like to see this structured?

- ☐ Computer tutorials
- ☐ Computer simulations
- ☐ Question and answer
- ☐ Review of study guide problems
- ☐ Other _____

Name: _____
College: _____
Date: _____

II. Instructional Survey of Economics Faculty — MCCCD

1. If the textbook used in your micro and macro classes has a study guide, is it

☐ Required ☐ Optional

2. If a study guide is required, how do you use it in class?

☐ Assigned problems
☐ Homework - collected problems
☐ Other _____

3. Are paper/writing assignments given in your classes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate below.
☐ Essay examinations
☐ Brief paper assignments
☐ Term paper
☐ Other _____

4. Aside from a test and study guide, do you use other ancillary materials?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate below.
☐ Newspaper, magazine articles
☐ Journal articles
☐ Other _____

5. Are audio-visual materials used in your micro and macro classes?

- ☐ Yes, frequently
- ☐ Yes, somewhat
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

6. If you answered yes to question five, what audio-visual materials do you use?

_____

_____

_____

7. Do your micro and macro courses require the use of computer software?

☐ Yes (Indicate below) ☐ No

_____

_____

_____

8. Is extra credit work available in your micro and macro classes

☐ Yes (Indicate below) ☐ No

_____

_____

_____

9. Describe the testing format for your micro and macro classes

- ☐ Multiple choice
- ☐ Multiple choice with matching, true/false
- ☐ Multiple choice with matching, true/false, and essays
- ☐ Essay
- ☐ Other _____

10. How frequently do you test?
    - ☐ Once a semester
    - ☐ Twice a semester
    - ☐ Three times a semester
    - ☐ Four times a semester
    - ☐ Five or more times a semester

11. Is a comprehensive final given in your micro and macro classes?

    ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name: _____
College: _____
Date: _____

I. Articulation Survey of Community College Economics Faculty in Arizona

1. Does your college require reading, math, or English placement exams, with an appropriate score, as a student prerequisite for taking economics?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate below.
- ☐ English placement exam
- ☐ Math placement exam
- ☐ Reading placement exam

2. If your answer to question one was no, would you be in favor of placement exams?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate below.
- ☐ English placement exam
- ☐ Math placement exam
- ☐ Reading placement exam

3. Are your introductory micro and macro economics courses offered at the 100 or 200 level?

☐ 100 level ☐ 200 level

4. If your micro and macro economics courses are at the 100 level, should they be changed to 200 level courses?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Describe the math that is used in your micro and macro courses.

_____
_____
_____

6. Are there any course prerequisites for macro and micro economics?

☐ Yes (Indicate below) ☐ No

_____
_____
_____

7. If you answered no to question six, would you be in favor of course prerequisites for micro and macro economics?

☐ Yes (Indicate below) ☐ No

_____
_____
_____

8. How many credit hours are granted to your micro and macro courses?

☐ 3 credit hours
☐ 4 credit hours
☐ Other _____

9. If the economics courses at your college carry 3 credits, would you life to see these carry 4 credits?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. For question nine, above, if a lab were to be used for the one extra credit hour, how would you like to see this structured?

- ☐ Computer tutorials
- ☐ Computer simulations
- ☐ Question and answer
- ☐ Review of study guide problems
- ☐ Other _____

Name: _____
College: _____
Date: _____

II. Instructional Survey of Community College Economics Faculty in Arizona

1. If the textbook used in your micro and macro classes has a study guide, is it

☐ Required ☐ Optional

2. If a study guide is required, how do you use it in class?

☐ Assigned problems
☐ Homework - collected problems
☐ Other _____

3. Are paper/writing assignments given in your classes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate below.
☐ Essay examination
☐ Term paper
☐ Brief paper assignments
☐ Other _____

4. Aside from a text and study guide, do you use other ancillary materials?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate below.
☐ Newspaper, magazine articles
☐ Journal articles
☐ Other _____

5. Are audio-visual materials used in your micro and macro classes?

- ☐ Yes, frequently
- ☐ Yes, somewhat
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

6. If you answered yes to question five, what audio-visual materials do you use?

_____

_____

_____

7. Do your micro and macro courses require the use of computer software?

☐ Yes (Indicate below) ☐ No

_____

_____

_____

8. Is extra credit work available in your micro and macro classes?

☐ Yes (Indicate below) ☐ No

_____

_____

_____

9. Describe your testing format for your micro and macro classes

- ☐ Multiple choice
- ☐ Multiple choice with matching, true/false
- ☐ Multiple choice with matching, true/false and essays
- ☐ Essay

10. How frequently do you test?

- ☐ Once a semester
- ☐ Twice a semester
- ☐ Three times a semester
- ☐ Four times a semester
- ☐ Five or more times a semester

11. Is a comprehensive final given in your micro and macro classes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Table 1

Should a standardized, normed reading placement instrument, with an appropriate score, be a student prerequisite for taking economics?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	10	76.9	4 *	80	14	77
NO	3	23.1	1	20	4	23
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

* One college already requires it.

Table 2

Should a standardized, normed English placement exam, with an appropriate score, be a student prerequisite for taking economics?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	9	69.2	4 *	80	13	72
NO	4	30.8	1	20	5	28
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

* Two colleges already require it.

Table 3

Should a standardized, normed math placement instrument, with an appropriate score, be a student prerequisite for taking economics?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	9	69.2	4 *	80	13	72
NO	4	30.8	1	20	5	28
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

* Two colleges already require it.

Table 4

Should ECN 111 and 112 be renumbered to 200 level courses?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	10	76.9	4 *	80	14	77
NO	3	23.1	1	20	4	23
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

* All four colleges reported that their courses were numbered at the 200 level.

Table 5

Level of math that is used in the micro and macroeconomics classes.

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Algebra	9	69.2	4	80	13	72.2
Read, Interpret Graphics	4	30.8	0	0	4	22.2
Arithmetic	0	0	1	20	1	5.6
None	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

Table 6

Would you be in favor of a math prerequisite for micro and macroeconomics?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	10	76.9	2 *	40	12	67
NO	3	23.1	3	60	6	33
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

* For these two colleges, introductory algebra is required.

Table 7

Level of math that should be used as a math prerequisite.

Level of Math	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Basic Arithmetic	1	10	0	0	1	8.4
Intro Algebra	7	70	2	100	9	75
Intermediate Algebra	2	20	0	0	2	16.6
Calculus	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	10	100	2	100	12	100

Table 8

Maricopa Faculty Preferred Sequence — Micro or Macro

Preferred Sequence	Number	%
Macro before Micro	0	0
Micro before Macro	7	53.8
Sequence Unimportant	6	46.2
TOTAL	13	100

Table 9

Should the micro and macro courses carry 4 credit hours each?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	6	46	0	0	6	33
NO	3	54	5	100	12	67
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

Table 10

If the economics courses (micro and macro) were to carry 4 credits, how should this extra hour be structured? (MCCCD only)

	Number	%
Extended lecture	1	11
Lab	8	89
TOTAL	9	100

Table 11 *

If a lab were to be used for the one extra credit hour, how would you like to see this structured?

	MCCCD	NON MCCCD	TOTAL
Computer Tutorials	5		5
Computer Simulations	4		4
Question and Answer	5		5
Review of Study Guide	7	3	10
Other	4	1	5

* Due to multiple responses, totals do not add up to numbers listed for respondents.

Table 12

If the textbook used in your micro and macro classes has a study guide, is it

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Required	2	15.4	2	40	4	22
Optional	11	84.6	3	60	14	78
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

Table 13

If a study guide is required, how do you use it in class?

	Number
Assigned Problems	3
Homework-Collected Problems	2

Table 14

Are paper/writing assignments given in your classes?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	12	92	3	60	15	83
NO	1	8	2	40	3	17
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

Table 15

Type of Writing Assignment

	Number
Essay Exams	11
Brief Paper Assignments	6
Term Paper	4
Extra Credit	1

Table 16

Aside from a text and study guide, do you use other ancillary materials?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	11	85	4	80	15	83
NO	2	15	1	20	3	17
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

Table 17

Types of ancillary materials used

	Number
Newspaper, Magazine Articles	14
Journal Articles	7
Handouts	1
Programmed Material	1
Films	2
C-SPAN	1

Table 18

Are audiovisual materials used in your micro and macro classes?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Frequently	1	8.33	1	20	2	11.76
Somewhat	1	8.33	2	20	3	17.64
Seldom	5	41.66	2	40	7	41.17
Never	5	41.66	0	0	5	29.41
Total	12	100	5	100	17	100

* 1 not answered

Table 19

Audiovisual materials used, by type.

Bill Moyers
Economics USA (2)
Overhead Transperencies (2)
Frontline
C-SPAN
Free to Choose

Table 20

Do your micro and macro courses require the use of computer software?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	2	15.4	0	0	2	11
NO	11	84.6	5	100	16	89
TOTAL	13	100	5	100	18	100

Table 21

Is extra credit work available in your micro and macro classes?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	7	58	3	60	10	59
NO	5	2	2	40	7	41
TOTAL	12	100	5	100	17	100

Table 22

Describe the testing format for your micro and macro classes.

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Multiple Choice	6	46.1	2	40	8	44
Multiple Choice/True False	1	7.7	1	20	2	11
Multiple Choice/Essay	5	38.5	1	20	6	33
Problems	1	7.7	1	20	2	11
Total	13	100	5	100	18	100

Table 23

How frequently **do** you test?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Once a semester	0	0	0	0	0	0
Twice a semester	0	0	0	0	0	0
Three times a semester	1	8.4	0	0	1	5.8
Four times a semester	6	50	3	60	9	52.9
Five or more times	5	41.6	2	40	7	41.1
Total	12	100	5	100	17	100

Table 24

Is a comprehensive final given in your micro and macro classes?

	MCCCD		NON MCCCD		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
YES	6	50	2	40	8	47
NO	6	50	3	60	9	53
TOTAL	12	100	5	100	17	100

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